

The Integrated Disability Evaluation Process in Europe
By David K. Spencer and Manuel Garcia

So you're assigned to a unit in the US Army in Europe and you've just been written a permanent profile. What now? Your first Web searches will provide you general information on the Integrated Disability Evaluation Process (IDES), but these initial searches probably won't identify that the IDES process in Europe is different. This article provides you with a brief overview of what you need to know to successfully negotiate through the IDES process in Europe.

First, the IDES process is a good thing for Soldiers. It is a joint process between the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to evaluate a servicemember's capacity for further service through a Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) and a Physical Evaluation Board (PEB). It's also designed to prevent or minimize potential lags between a servicemember's departure from military service and the beginning of receiving benefits. This is important because close to 95 percent of Soldiers who enter the IDES process in Europe will likely depart military service (based on historical data). Some will return to duty if the clinicians involved in the process agree that the initial permanent profile was incorrect or if the Soldier's medical condition has changed. However, Soldiers beginning the IDES process should immediately begin preparing for separation from service by using the various services available at his or her garrison such as the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP). Waiting to begin using these services may cause significant challenges for the Soldier and his or her family in making a successful transition to civilian life.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the IDES process. In short, after a valid P3 or P4 permanent profile is written, a Soldier will proceed through the Medical Evaluation Board phase, the Physical Evaluation Board phase, a Transition Phase, and a Reintegration Phase during which the majority of IDES Soldiers in Europe will likely depart military service. The Soldier remains assigned to his or her parent unit throughout the process unless an Exception to Policy is approved.¹

¹ Exceptions to policy can be granted for (1) an extreme medical condition, (2) if a Soldier's unit or base is inactivating, or (3) if a Soldier is part of a dual-military family and his or her spouse is PCSing from Europe. In these cases, the Soldier will either be assigned to the Warrior Transition Battalion-Europe or to another WTU depending on the situation.

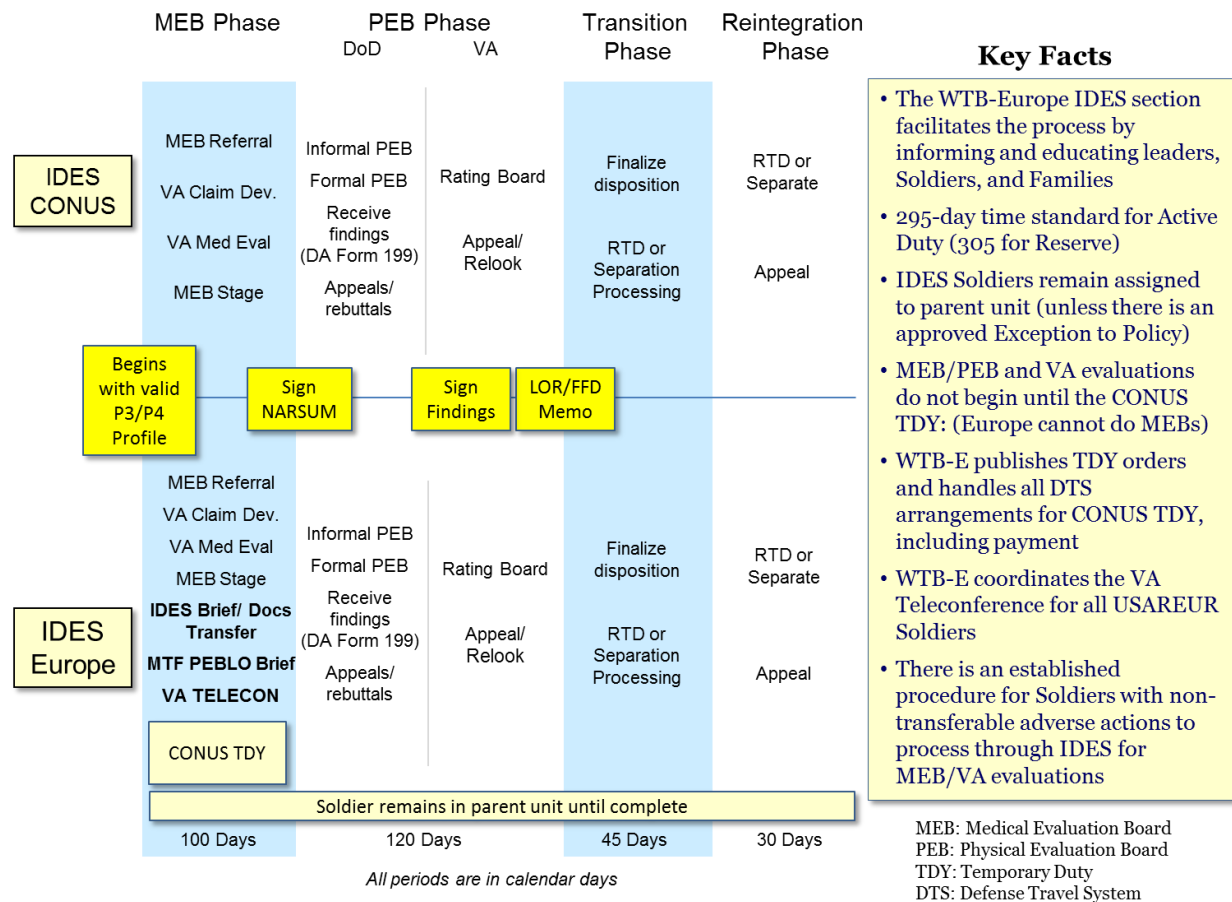


Figure 1: The IDES Process in the Continental United States (CONUS) versus the United States Army Europe (USAREUR)²

As noted, the process is different in Europe. We don't have the ability to conduct MEBs in Europe. As a result, the most critical portion of a Soldier's IDES process is a two-week TDY and Return to either Fort Bragg or Fort Eustis at the beginning of the process to conduct their interviews and appointments with DoD and VA clinicians. In preparation, a new IDES Soldier must immediately begin a dialogue with the Physical Evaluation Board Disability Officer (PEBLO) at their respective Medical Treatment Facility (MTF). The Office of the Soldier Counsel will also provide a legal briefing and will provide legal information during the IDES process. Finally, a Warrior Transition Battalion-Europe (WTB-E) IDES Contact Representative will contact the Soldier to ensure that all the necessary documentation for the TDY and Return trip is assembled and prepared, and that the Soldier and his or her family are well-informed throughout the process. The contact representative will also facilitate the Soldier's attendance at the mandatory teleconference with the VA prior to the TDY and Return.

² Elements of this diagram are drawn from the timeline at: Warrior Care Blog, "Integrated Disability Evaluation System," DoD Office of Warrior Care Policy, <http://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/disability-evaluation/ides/> (accessed 23 May 2014).

WTB-E Europe IDES Section

A Co IDES Contact Rep.	DSN: 483-6230
B Co IDES Contact Reps.	DSN: 476-2145
	DSN: 354-7530
IDES Program Manager	DSN: 483-6212
IDES PEBLO/TDY Coord.	DSN: 483-6780

E-mail: usarmy.landstuhl.medcom-ermc.list.wtb-e-ides-npe-owner@mail.mil

Figure 2: USAREUR IDES Contact Representatives

USAREUR IDES PEBLOs

Bavaria (BMEDDAC)

DSN: 476-2174

DSN: 476-2197

DSN: 476-2173

Landstuhl (LRMC)

DSN: 590-6491

DSN: 486-7297

DSN: 590-5095

Vicenza

DSN: 636-9529

E-mail: usarmy.sembach.medcom-ermc.list.peblo-landstuhl@mail.mil

Figure 3: USAREUR PEBLOs

Neither the Soldier nor his or her unit is involved in arranging the TDY and Return. The WTB-E's IDES section will arrange the travel in DTS, provide the funding, and prepare the TDY orders. The unit simply needs to provide the Soldier transportation to and from the departure airport and ensure that the Soldier makes it to his or her flight. The Soldier's responsibilities are to be prepared, be engaged, and attend all appointments during the TDY. The WTB-E and supporting units provide leadership during the TDYs to ensure Soldiers are able to make it to all required appointments.

When the Soldier returns to Europe after the TDY and Return trip, he or she waits to receive a critical document—the Narrative Summary (NARSUM) of the MEB—from the PEBLO. After the Soldier signs this document, he or she will wait for the DA Form 199 (Physical Evaluation Board

Proceedings), which must also be signed. The Soldier can appeal the findings on these documents throughout the process.

At this point, if the process has identified that the Soldier will return to duty, a Fit for Duty memo will be forthcoming. Those Soldiers who will receive a Letter of Release as a result should finalize preparations for separation from military service. This is because soon after signing the DA Form 199 (if the Soldier does not appeal), a Soldier will receive his or her Letter of Release. And once the Soldier receives that, it's time for final outprocessing from service.

For Active Duty Soldiers in the IDES process in Europe, the entire process will take, on the average, about 7–9 months based on historical data. This will be a time of uncertainty and stress for the Soldier and his or her family since most Soldiers in the IDES process will transition from the military into the civilian sector. It is important throughout this process for both the Soldier and the family to begin using available transition services as soon as possible after starting the IDES process. Soldiers and families should also draw on the available sources of information to stay informed and facilitate the process. The primary sources are the chain of command, the PEBLO, the IDES representatives, and the Office of the Soldier Counsel. By staying informed, planning ahead, documenting the process, and diligently preparing for the future, the Soldier and family members will pave the way for a smooth IDES process and a successful return to duty or transition from the military.